



# FACT Sheet

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES

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## Division of Licensed Resources Child Protective Services (DLR/CPS) Frequently Asked Questions – Foster Home Specific

### **Q** What is a Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigation?

**A** When Children's Administration (CA) gets a report alleging that a child has been abused or neglected in foster care, the report is investigated by a DLR/CPS Investigator. These reports are investigated to determine whether abuse or neglect occurred and to assess the safety of children in the foster home.

### **Q** How will DLR/CPS contact me about an investigation?

**A** An investigating social worker will notify you at the earliest point in the investigation that does not jeopardize child safety. They may contact you by phone, or in person at your home. A DLR/CPS investigator may come to your home unannounced.

### **Q** Can I tell the Investigator what happened from my point of view?

**A** The investigator will contact you either in person or by phone for an interview. In most cases the DLR/CPS investigator will interview the children in your care first. You are encouraged to send in a written explanation of what happened (even if you think the referral will be determined to be unfounded). Your interview and any written documents you provide will be considered in the investigation and placed in the DLR/CPS file.

### **Q** What is the FIRST program?

**A** FIRST stands for **Foster Intervention/Retention Support Team**. Trained foster parent volunteers provide support to foster parents during a DLR/CPS investigation. FIRST volunteers may provide

referrals to community resources, and information about DLR policies and procedures.

**Contact FIRST by calling (253) 219-6782.**

### **Q** How long will the investigation take?

**A** The Division of Licensed Resources aims to complete investigations within 45 days. However some investigations may take longer. Unless law enforcement or a prosecuting attorney is involved, state law requires DLR/CPS to complete the investigation within 90 days (RCW 26.44.030). If law enforcement is involved in the investigation, DLR/CPS defers to local law enforcement protocols.

### **Q** Are there consequences for my biological children?

**A** A Children's Administration social worker or investigator must report an allegation of abuse or neglect of any child. If a social worker or investigator believes that your children's safety is at risk, we will provide services to help keep your children safe. The DLR/CPS investigator wants to hear from everyone with relevant information about what happened regarding an allegation of abuse or neglect, and may interview your child in an investigation. State law allows CA to interview alleged victims and foster children without their parents' permission. The investigator may ask for your permission to interview your child, if they witnessed the incident. A neutral adult third party can be present during the child interview if the child wants one.



**Q Are my foster children going to be removed?**

**A** Every case is different. Sometimes foster children are removed during an investigation. Often they are not. These decisions are made early in the case with limited information, with the goal of protecting the safety of foster children. The DLR/CPS Investigator looks at an allegation and assesses the risk to foster children in the home. If the Division of Licensed Resources does not have enough information to ensure the safety of foster children in your home, they will recommend that foster children be removed. The child's social worker and his or her supervisor may decide to move foster children at any time. Children's Administration is the legal guardian of children in foster care and has the responsibility to move foster children when it is necessary to address their safety, well-being and permanence.

**Q Will the Children's Administration place more foster children with me during an investigation?**

**A** Your licensor will address this with you on a case-by-case basis. If there are concerns about risk, your licensor may put a Stop Placement on the home. If there is a Stop Placement on your home, no more children may be placed with you until the risk is reduced. You may choose not to have children placed with you during the investigation, if you feel like it would be too stressful for you or your family.

**Q Will a foster child who is removed from my home be returned?**

**A** The child's social worker and supervisor will decide the best placement for the child. It is helpful for them to know whether you would like to be a placement option for the child who was removed. However, the child's social worker and supervisor will consider the child's permanent plan, whether the current placement has developed another routine, and whether a secure and positive relationship has been formed between the child and the new care givers. Moving the child back to your home may not be in the child's best interest.

**Q What are the possible outcomes, or "findings," of a DLR/CPS investigation?**

**A** Investigations are either "founded" or "unfounded." Findings are defined by state law (RCW 26.44.020 and WAC 388-15). The majority of DLR/CPS investigations result in unfounded findings.

***Founded: More likely than not abuse or neglect occurred.***

***Unfounded: More likely than not abuse or neglect did not occur or there is not enough information to determine whether abuse or neglect occurred.***

**Q How will this affect my employment?**

**A** In most circumstances, unfounded findings will not affect your employment. However, if you have a founded finding and you are employed by an agency that works with children or vulnerable adults, it may affect your employment.

**Q How will I be notified of the outcome of the investigation?**

**A** The investigating supervisor will send you a letter with the finding when the investigation is complete. If the finding is "founded," the appeal process is outlined in the letter. After the investigation is completed, you may request a copy of the investigative assessment and your DLR/CPS file.

**Q Can I make a written statement explaining what happened?**

**A** You are encouraged to send the investigator a written statement at any time during the investigation. It will be placed in the DLR/CPS file. If the investigator gets your statement before the investigation is complete, it will be considered in the investigation findings.

**As a Licensed Foster Parent, Where Can I Get More Information?**

**<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>**

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